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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, NEA/PPD, NEA/P, IIP/G/NEA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [SOCI](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: OMAN ONLINE: TERROR AND TANCREDO

1. Summary: The Omani Internet message boards "al-Sablah" and "al-Majarra" are the liveliest and most comprehensive Arabic-language fora for political and social discourse in the country, touching on issues and personalities rarely addressed in the conventional media. While not totally free, nor wholly reflective of Omani public opinion, these popular sites nevertheless offer a worthwhile window into the hot topics and unvarnished views of the day. This edition of Oman Online contains the following topics:

-- The Sharm El-Sheikh Bombings
-- The Global War On Terror
-- Remarks By U.S. Congressman Tom Tancredo

End summary.

The Danger Of Sharm

2. A discussion in al-Sablah regarding the horrific bombings in the Egyptian resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh revealed that Omani message board contributors often have complex emotions regarding terrorism. Many respondents condemned the attack, which killed mostly Egyptian citizens: "Those who killed dozens of innocents in Egypt and London are devoted to the same ideology that led to the execution of Egypt's ambassador to Iraq. This ideology is based on hatred, and all people need to reject it," wrote one member. Another commented, "We as Muslims have to scrutinize these bombings carefully. We can't let these bombers drag the world into a religious war in the name of Islam."

3. The conversation then turned to issues of democracy in the face of terrorism. One author noted, "The real question is how these attacks will affect government policies on security. If bombings such as these continue, won't governments be forced to clamp down even further on the people?" Agreed another, "These explosions put governments in a difficult position, having to decide between openness and security. When people feel threatened, they will allow the government to do anything to make them feel safe."

GWOT Have You Done For Me Lately?

4. This philosophical perspective carried over to a related topic on the Global War On Terror. "All major wars like World War II have come to an end, but the so-called 'war on terror' has no end in sight. America has not convinced anybody that this war is capable of arriving at a decisive result," observed one contributor. Another added, "We are coming to a point where Western nations will not be able to distinguish Muslims from terrorists, and all Muslims will be targets. Likewise, the terrorists will be emboldened that they can achieve political victories through their violent actions."

Hardly Representative

5. Colorado Representative Tom Tancredo's July 15 remarks about Mecca on a talk-radio program generated a storm of responses in al-Sablah, all of them critical. "The U.S. government spends millions on public diplomacy in the Middle East, and then a senior government official wipes out the accomplishments with a single sentence," remarked one contributor. Another respondent inquired, "I'd like to ask Mr. Tancredo: if the IRA sets off a couple of car bombs in Manchester, does that mean the British government should bomb Vatican City?" Still another argued, "Tancredo's statements are turning millions of people into America's enemies. You can't win a war by constantly creating additional foes."

BALTIMORE